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By William Claiborne
Washington Post Staff Writer

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HS/HC-228

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Several high White House aides invoked the name of President Nixon when they asked the Central Intelligence Agency to help cover up the Watergate scandal and assist key conspirators, Sen. John L. McClellan (D-Ark.) disclosed yesterday.

For that reason, McClellan said, Richard M. Helms, who was then CIA director, and other intelligence officials did not inform either Congress or the President about the requests.

McClellan said they "wanted to go as far as they could to accommodate the President" because the requests had come from such high offices of the Executive Branch.

"Some things went too far and they put a stop to it," McClellan said after listening to three hours of testimony by Helms in a closed Senate Appropriations subcommittee hearing.

Helms, who is now ambassador to Iran, emerged from the hearing room with his jaw tightly clenched and bored through a crowd of newsmen to a waiting car without making a comment about the first of at least three scheduled appearances before Watergate-related investigating panels.

But McClellan later reviewed Helms' testimony, and then angrily accused the White House of violating the National Security Act by trying to pressure the CIA into covering up financial manipulations connected with Watergate.

Referring to the 1947 act that prohibits the CIA from domestic intelligence work, McClellan said, "I'm satisfied the CIA made a mistake. I'm satisfied that the CIA was imposed upon."

McClellan also implicitly criticized Helms for his silence over a two-year pe-

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Aides Invoked Nixon's Name

HELMS, From A1

riod, saying that when it became obvious "a cloud was being passed over the agency" the former CIA director had an opportunity to complain about the pressures brought to bear by the White House.

But he reserved his most stinging criticism for former presidential aides H.R. (Bob) Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman and John W. Dean III, calling their actions "beyond impropriety."

Two major White House requests of the CIA to assist in apparent conspiracies were met, McClellan said, and a third was refused. Only one of the three requests, he said, was personally approved by Helms, and that was done "reluctantly."

"Mr. Helms and his assistants were seriously imposed upon and they undertook to

mitigate those impositions by doing as little as they could, and finally they did refuse," McClellan said.

The first CIA involvement with Watergate figures, McClellan quoted Helms as testifying, occurred when the agency provided E. Howard Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy with disguises, burglary tools and electronic surveillance equipment that were used to break into the offices of Pentagon Papers defendant Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

McClellan said Helms did not know the equipment had been provided—at Ehrlichman's request—until "some time later, when Hunt began making more requests for CIA assistance.

Helms, according to McClellan, ordered former Deputy CIA Director Gen. Robert E. Cushman to stop

providing equipment to Hunt.

McClellan said the next request came when David L. Young, a National Security Council staff member, asked the CIA for a psychological profile on Ellsberg.

Helms "reluctantly went along" with that request, McClellan said, even though he "didn't think it was quite proper by reason of the source."

Former presidential aide Egli Krogh Jr. has said in a sworn statement that the profile provided no useful information to a special White House security squad called "the plumbers," and for that reason the burglary of the psychiatrist's office was planned by Hunt and Liddy.

The third White House attempt to involve the CIA in the Watergate scandal was

made last June 23 by Haldeman to Helms and his deputy, Lt. Gen. Vernon Walters, McClellan said.

McClellan said Helms testified that Haldeman "suggested to him that Gen. Walters go to see the director of the FBI and ask them to call off the investigation into the Mexican money journey."

He was referring to the \$100,000 check that was "laundered" through a Mexico City bank, proceeds of which ended up in the safe of Nixon fund-raiser Maurice H. Stans. The money figured in bankrolling the Watergate break-in and other political espionage operations of the Committee for the Re-election of the President.

Walters testified before another Senate subcommittee on Monday that he told

in Pressuring CIA

Dean three days later that he would resign if ordered by the White House to compromise the CIA in the Watergate case.

McClellan said yesterday that it was Helms who ordered Walters not to get involved in asking Acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray to cover up the probe. McClellan said Helms was convinced that the FBI investigation of the Mexican connection would not interfere with the CIA's operatives in Mexico, which he said had been suggested by Haldeman.

McClellan and Sen. Roman L. Hruska (R-Neb.) repeatedly emphasized Helms' reluctance to become involved in a Watergate cover-up. Another subcommittee member, Sen. John Pastore (D-R.I.), described Helms as "quite hurt that his reputation has been tainted after

40 years (of government service)."

However, when asked why Helms did not take his concerns to President Nixon while his agency was allegedly being pressured by Haldeman and Ehrlichman, McClellan said:

"He remained silent. . . . He didn't feel that he was called on to go to the President. He didn't want the CIA involved."

When reminded that in at least three confirmation appearances before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last January and February Helms flatly denied any CIA involvement in Watergate, McClellan said, "He did not relate this to the Watergate."

Hruska chided reporters for attaching the "Watergate" label to every allegation of White House misfeasance. He claimed that at the time of the con-

firmation hearings Helms did not connect the requests made to the CIA to the break-in at Democratic National Headquarters.

McClellan conceded that he "didn't intend to put (Helms) through the grill" during the hearing. He said that he and other subcommittee members had little time to prepare questions and that Helms was testifying mostly from memory.

However, McClellan said he probably will seek more testimony from Helms at a future date. He said he also planned to seek testimony from Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Young.

Helms, meanwhile, is scheduled to testify at 10 a.m. today before the Senate Armed Services Committee and sometime later before a federal grand jury here and the Senate Select Subcommittee investigating the Watergate scandal.